

A
L E T T E R

FROM THE

Rev. *George Whitfield*, B. A.

TO THE

Rev. *Laurence Sterne*, M. A.

[Price One Shilling.]

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THE

OF

LETTERS

FROM THE

Rev. George W. Williams, B.A.

TO THE

Rev. Lawrence Snow, M.A.

OF THE

[Price One Shilling]

A
L E T T E R

FROM THE

Rev. *George Whitfield*, B. A.

TO THE

Rev. *Laurence Sterne*, M. A.

The Supposed Author of a Book entitled

The LIFE and OPINIONS of
Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.

*For his Letters are weighty and powerful, but his
bodily Presence is weak, and his Speech
contemptible.*

2 COR. X. 10.

L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year 1760.

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JUNE 1935

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FROM THE

Rev. George W. White, B. A.

TO THE

Rev. Lawrence Sterne, M. A.

The suggested Author of a Book entitled

The Life and Opinions of
Tryphena Shandy, Gentleman

For his letters are written and preserved, but his
bodily presence is weak, and his spirit
consequently,

2 Cor. x. 10.

L O W D O M

Printed in the Year 1760.



LETTER, &c.



PERHAPS you may expect from me, notwithstanding my sacred function an idle tale tending to excite laughter, but if you do you are disappointed; I address you in a letter, but my letter shall contain a sermon; this is a truly apostolical practice. St. Paul, and many other saints, wrote epistles, but I

A

never

never yet heard of a saint's writing a bawdy novel ; 'tis true that many pastors of your church have done it as well as yourself, but the pastors of your church have long since erred and strayed like lost sheep, and therefore it is no wonder the flock should forsake the truth, and seek after ungodly and sinful fancies. 'Tis an old proverb but a very true one, that " one scabby sheep spoils a whole flock ;" but alas ! how dreadful must the condition of the flock be, when the shepherd himself is scabby.

Oh *Sterne* ! thou art scabby, and such is the leprosy of thy mind that it is not to be cured like the leprosy of the body, by dipping nine times in the river Jordan. Thy prophane history of *Tristram Shandy* is as it were an anti-gospel, and seems to have been penned by the hand of Antichrist himself ; it tends to excite laughter, but you should remember that the wisest man that ever was, that the great king Solomon himself said of laughter " it is mad," and of mirth " what doth it ?" *Sterne* ! (for brother I can no longer call thee,

thee, though I look upon the clergy of the Church of England as my brethren, when they discharge conscientiously the duties of their function) *Sterne*, apostate *Sterne* ! if Solomon was now alive, he would not put the question, “ What doth mirth.” Thy book would fully shew him, that mirth is nearly akin to wickedness, and that the tickling of laughter is occasioned by the obscene Devil.

Had John Bunyan been now alive to behold thy abominable work, he would have cried out, “ Antichrist is come, Antichrist has published his antichristian gospel ; and lo there shall arise other Antichrists, his disciples, who shall write books filled with obscenity, and these obscene books shall be read in a degenerate age, when the sacred oracles are neglected. The ministers of the gospel shall cease to point out the way that leads to the New Jerusalem, and, deserting the paths of grace, shall give themselves up to the evil spirit Mammon, and lead their

“flocks to Babylon. But the time shall
 “come, when the cup of wrath shall be
 “poured down their throats, and when
 “that time is come, it will be more tole-
 “rable for the inhabitants of Sodom and
 “Gomorrhah than for them.”

IN words like these the pious John Bun-
 yan might have addressed thee, if he was
 alive, but since he is not, I must supply his
 place, and reprove thee with meekness of
 spirit: Faith might have made thee whole,
 but thy worldly practices have render'd
 thee unsound; thy mind is cankered, and
 the vanities of the world have so taken hold
 of thy sense, that all true believers must de-
 spair of thy regeneration. We have no
 hopes that thou wilt ever put off the old
 man; by the old man I mean *Torick*, a
 name that Shakespear or the Devil must
 have put into thy head, and which thou
 hast prophanely prefixed to two volumes of
 sermons.

The

The nobility and gentry have likewise been led astray by the same evil spirit; they have encouraged thee, and thus thou art become a deceitful teacher of mankind; but though thy light shineth, 'twere much better for thy soul's health that thou hadst hid it under a bushel; for the hour will come, and perhaps it is not far off, when the light of thy wit and humour shall be extinguished, and *Tristram Shandy* shall know his place no more. It shall come like a thief in the night, and deprive thee of life, it shall pick thy vital pockets, as thou hast pickt the pockets of all the nobility and gentry. Then wilt thou mourn thy past follies, when thou shalt no longer meet with a harlot at St. James's Park, or lasciviously yield to the temptations of the flesh at Ranelagh, but become a feast; a feast where thou shalt not eat but be eaten; a certain convocation of politic worms shall feed upon thy body, and there shall remain to thy soul only a fearful looking for of judgment.

Therefore,

Therefore, think of it in this thy day, though regeneration is not the work of a day, repentance is often the work of a few moments, and repentance may at last, by the assistance of the spirit, lead you up the high road of contrition, and conduct you, though a reprobate, to grace. If you once get thither, it will give me the highest satisfaction, and, in order to prepare your way, I must heartily exhort you to frequent the *Tabernacle*, where you will not want spiritual assistance, and J--f--s Ch--st may perhaps redeem you from the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Thou hast studied prophane plays more than the word of God, and thy text is generally taken from the writings of Shakespeare, an author who never had any idea of the new birth, and yet without the new birth it will be in vain for you to hope for salvation; unless you enter again into your mother's womb, you never can be saved. Come, I'll tell you a story upon the new birth, and God send it may turn your heart to grace, *Amen* and *Amen*. A

A wicked prophane author that had wrote as much like a libertine as yourself, was once taken ill, but not thinking his disorder dangerous, he made a jest of it, and in a gamesome mood, sent for a minister of the gospel; when the minister was come, he desired him to read a chapter in the Bible to him, “ For, says he, I very much want sleep, and I am sure that will very soon make me sleep.” A few days after his disorder increased, and when he saw himself upon the point of death, he sent again to the man of God, and intreated him to read one of his sermons to him, in order to awaken him to a true sense of his deplorable condition, and conduct him to the narrow path that leads to life. Upon this says the man of God, “ The path that leads to life is very narrow, and so sometimes is the path that leads to death; those that are hanged at Tyburn always find it so, for they stand upon a board not two inches broad; but now you are in the broad way, and you have so often resisted
“ the

“ the motions of the spirit, that your journey must be all down hill.”

Thus you see that vengeance overtakes the unrighteous, repent therefore, for the day of judgment was never nearer than it is now; in that dreadful day you will cry out to the booksellers shops, “ Fall upon me,” and to the counters “ Conceal and cover me.” But the spirit, if resisted thro’ life, will withhold its influence, and as thy days were graceless, thou wilt be given up to a reprobate sense. The lamb that bled did not bleed for thee, if thou dost turn aside from thy faith, and, though a clergyman, give thyself up to secular whimsies and wanton back-sliding. He that was wounded was not wounded for thee, since by thy prophane writings thou hast crucified him anew in the flesh.

Thou art the man of sin, and in thee the Scripture is fulfilled, and the measure of thine iniquity shall soon be full; thou
hast

hast mocked at religion, virtue, and honour, but know that there is one that will mock when your fear cometh.

Fly, therefore, in time from the wrath to come; for if adulterers and fornicators enter into the lake, surely he that writes to please whoremasters and adulterers must be plunged into the lake likewise.

You have forsaken the ministry, you have deserted the faith, you have had recourse to vile expedients to procure bread; but you seem to have totally forgotten him who with a loaf and five fishes gave a repast to a multitude, who rose up cramm'd, as if from a clergy or a city feast.

Learn to chew the cud of piety, make a hearty meal upon faith, and you'll find it very different from Dr. *Slop's* wafer; not that I would be understood to reflect upon the Papists, Christians may enter to the throne of salvation through many doors.

B

For

For example, there are four doors at the *Tabernacle*, where I preach sometimes; some enter at the East, some at the West, some at the North, and some at the South; but that does not hinder us from being all comfortably assembled together, and when two or three are gathered together, the holy spirit is always in the midst of them.

But now I talk of two or three, come to the *Tabernacle*, where you shall see seven or eight thousand pious souls assembled together, and there I'll preach a sermon for your conversion; for all I desire is to bring over as many souls as possible to J--s--s Ch---st, the only door through which you, or I, or any body else, can enter to salvation.

Come, though your sins are as red as scarlet, I'll wash them as white as snow, and though you have drank deep of the whore of Babylon's cup, become one of my followers and you shall drink of the juice

of the grape; not the grape that is pressed by peasants in Burgundy, but the grape from which celestial wine is extracted in Paradise.

Oh *Sterne*! forsake the paths that lead unto Ranelagh, take no more walks in St. James's Park, but come to me and I'll make you take a spiritual walk; a walk even up to the top of mount Tabor.

'Tis that holy mount you should endeavour to ascend; but you have followed the evil spirit who hath led you to the highest pinnacle of the temple and from thence shewn you all the vanities of this wicked world, with which thou hast been bewitched, that thou hast fallen upon thy knees and worshipp'd him. Thou hast received the mark of the beast, and thy return to grace is, at present, almost totally despaired of.

But turn again to the way of truth and I will be your guide. I'll lead you from the path that leads to perdition to the turnpike of grace; and, when thou entrest thereat, thou wilt find that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Though thou art a sinner, I wish for thy regeneration; but expect not the new birth, till thou turnest thy heart to J--f--s Ch--st; become entirely a Methodist, I say entirely, for, wicked and prophane as thou art, I can discover some principles of Methodism in thy writings; nay, I can easily prove that you and your brethren of the Church of England are all rank Methodists, do you not know it?

There I'll warrant you'll cry out, "Sir, you're beginning to deal in mystery. I suppose you'll prophesy by and by." But stay a while, Mr. Sterne, or Mr. Tristram Shandy, or Mr. Torick, and I'll prove what I advanced.

You'll

You'll ask me, without doubt, how I can prove it? Why I'll prove it by a dilemma; either you of the church of England sleep in your churches, or you don't understand what you hear there, or else you are all downright Methodists.

You have undoubtedly often heard and often yourself pronounced these words of the liturgy of the church of England:
 "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds,
 "in the knowledge and love of God;
 "and the blessing of God Almighty the
 "Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
 "be amongst you and remain with you
 "always."

"The peace of God,"—That smells rankly of Methodism; but indeed, *Lawrence*, I am sorry to say, that peace does not dwell with thee. But come to me, or some other man of God, and thou mayst still partake of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. "The

" fel-

lowship of the Holy Ghost ! — This
 smells still stronger of Methodism.

Come, perhaps I may make a convert
 of you yet; I have converted many sinners
 as hardened as yourself, for the new birth
 comes in a manner not to be explained.
 Regeneration is a greater mystery than any
 mystery of our holy religion, but thou seem-
 est more inclined to rely upon a mystery of
 iniquity than upon the mystery of regene-
 ration; yet even thy prophane *Terick*, and
 thy prophane *Shakespeare*, might have given
 thee a glimmering of the new birth;

*Get thee to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let
 her lay it on an inch thick to this favour!*

Why, what is this, but an exhortation
 to put off the old man? Depend upon it,
 the poet, prophane as he was, had regene-
 ration in view. But how is this great work
 of regeneration to be brought about?
 Who can deliver you from the womb of
 sin,

fin, and happily restore you to the new birth, and make you a child of God?

'Tis not Dr. *Slop* the man-midwife, 'tis not a papist quack that can by obstetric art, make you again enter your mother's womb, or come out of it again; Dr. *Slop* can never make you a child of election. There is but one man-midwife that can procure you a new birth, and that man-midwife is no other than the man J--C--a Ch--st.

Midwives upon earth have various ways of bringing a child into the world; sometimes they take it by the head, sometimes by the heels, but the great man-midwife of souls will at once take you by the head and shoulders, and, by the comfort of the spirit, throw you into the lap of regeneration.

You say that *Tristram Shandy's* misfortunes began nine months before he was born, and I really believe that your perverseness and prophane turn began nine months before you were born.

Pray

Pray then for the new birth; there will be no occasion for winding up a clock, regeneration does not depend upon wheels and springs; it depends only upon the spirit, it depends upon grace, and not upon mechanism.

Sterne, you have a hobby-horse and that hobby-horse may lead you to destruction, except you listen to some man of God. But I'll warrant if you were to see a man of God at the other end of the street, you'd run into some alehouse or tavern, and if he was to follow you thither, you'd say to him "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?"

When men are given over to a reprobate sense, they look upon the men of God as intruders; nay, what is still worse, they look upon J--s Ch--st as an intruder. But the Lord is not mocked; though thou hast laugh'd every thing serious to scorn, thou wilt cry another time, a time will come when thou wilt lay in the bitterness

of thy heart, "Lord be merciful to me a
" sinner."

Listen therefore to the advice I give
you, and don't despise it, because it is given
by a poor Methodist preacher. I know you
are a scholar, but should you be puffed up
with the pride of human learning, and
criticise the words I utter, should you look
upon the words of sobriety as folly and en-
thusiasm, God forgive you.

Come, I'll tell you a story, but it shan't
be a story in the *Shandy* taste, it shall be a
story of righteousness.

Once upon a time a graceless author took
it into his head to write several tracts against
Christianity, but being soon taken desperately
ill, he sent for a clergyman, and expressed
himself as follows. "Alas! I fear my works
" have perverted half mankind; I have
" done my utmost to propagate infidelity,
" and though I have acquired a great repu-
" tation

“ tation, it avails me nothing, since I run a
 “ risque of losing my own soul.” Here-
 upon the man of God desired him not to
 be uneasy upon that account ; “ For, says
 “ he, your books are all so weakly written,
 “ that no man of common sense can give
 “ them a reading, without, at the same
 “ time, discovering their futility.”

Such was his answer, and really I think
 your writings might be answered much in
 the same manner ; for, though the town
 has been taken in by them, the criticks, I
 mean the judicious criticks, will always look
 upon them as the productions of a crazy
 head and a depraved heart.

I speak to you with freedom, but the
 spirit will re-eccho my voice, and when
 thou art upon thy death-bed, thou wilt in
 vain hope for the beatific vision ; for be-
 atific vision is not to be obtained by such
 wretches as thee ; thou hast forsaken the
 paths of grace, and vanity, like an *ignis*
fatuus

fatuus, will lead thee to unavoidable destruction.

The pit of destruction gapes, and will soon open to receive thee, if thou dost not, in this thy day turn thy heart to righteousness; by righteousness, I here mean faith.

Good works will be insufficient to rescue thy soul from the power of sin; for, to use the words of the liturgy of the church of England, "In the sight of God shall no man living be justified."

When the blessed martyr Stephen was stoned, it did not appear that he was full of self-righteousness, or good works; the testimony that the spirit gave of him, is, that he was full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost.

Sterne, Sterne! if thou hadst been full of the Holy Ghost, thou wouldst never have written that prophane book, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, to judge of which, by the hand that wrote it, one would think the author had a cloven foot.

Thou art puffed up with spiritual pride, and the vanity of human learning has led thee aside into the paths of prophane-ness.

Thou hast even been so far elated as to give the likeness of thyself before thy sermons, but, though it is the likeness of something upon earth, I shrewdly doubt that it will never be the likeness of any thing in heaven.

Return therefore to grace, before it is too late; throw aside Shakespear, and take up the word of God.

Read,

Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, and you may, perhaps, by patience and comfort of the holy name of J--f--s Ch--st, be again led into the way of truth, from which you have deviated.

To facilitate your regeneration, I heartily pray, that the great *Philanthropist* of souls, that J--f--s Ch--st himself may be your man-midwife; he only can bring you to the new birth.

So, to his care I recommend you, and heartily pray for, and with your regeneration.

May J--f--s Ch--st assist at your delivery from sin, and regeneration render you a new man.

May your mind forsake wit, and have recourse to faith; for by faith alone thou canst be made whole.

Oh,

Oh, what a happiness it is to be a poor contrite sinner, and to be convinced that salvation is to be obtained by J--f--s Ch--st alone ! to whose mercy and mediation I earnestly exhort you to have recourse.

To promote thy conversion, I shall subjoin a hymn upon regeneration.

WHAT is there on earth,
For Christian souls, but the new
birth ?

Oh, perverse degenerate nation,
Hope not to escape damnation,
Without true faith and regeneration.
J--f--s on the cross was pierced,
Because wicked man transgressed,
Crucify him not anew,
Since he bled for sinful you ;
For the new birth sincerely strive,
And you shall save your soul alive.

F I N I S.